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along by himself and hopped round us twittering. Then he flew off, to return a little while later with another in tow—perhaps the hen bird. Twittering again, he presented us to her as a fabulous discovery. They twittered a commentary and flew off, returning a little later, this time with a whole flock of friends. Then, with the courage that comes with numbers, they all made for our eyes to get at the honey. We were forced to disillusion them.

VIII

The Shirians have tobacco, *pihni* as they call it: even the most primitive and savage of them, the Samatari, cultivate two things in some hidden corner of the forest known only to themselves—tobacco, and the cane from which they make their arrows. Vice and war!

We were highly attracted towards the Uagna river lands, which, according to Luis Antonio, was country rich in game and inhabited, or at least occasionally crossed, by the Samatari, who inspired terror all round them. Enrico, Momi, and I set out on an expedition there, leaving Jean and Artur to wait for the plane.

We stopped on the way at the Uarema settlement; Luis Antonio wanted to show us off to his people, who had never seen men with beards and wearing clothes.

That night we slept in a crowded hut, and our curiosity was drawn towards a young woman who had strung her hammock between those of Uarema's two nephews (whose persons were adorned with feathers and plumes). She stayed in all day as well, a coseted Shirian Cleopatra, continually looking at herself in the little glass we had given her and adjusting the white feather boa which covered her ears and her shoulders. During the course of the day other women came to help her with her toilet, painting her cheeks and forehead with certain precise geometrical designs: they used red and black colouring matter which when dry shone like enamel. Even her little quid of tobacco was smaller and daintier than others used. Uarema told us that she was the public woman of the tribe.

Next morning, when we were stepping into our boats again, Pancho and Benito came along in a big canoe. They wanted salt from us. We had very little, and had to refuse them. They went off in silence. When they were two hundred yards away, they shouted something in our direction. Luis Antonio

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not only let us take his picture but begged us to take it again, with his wife beside him. Then he caused general merriment by posing beside the 'public woman' who was painted and dolled up like a bird of paradise. In a third take, he stood between the two women, caressing their breasts in an excess of zeal. At this, enthusiasm knew no bounds. Even Uarema's brother, a venerable figure with his head crowned with the scars of old battles, burst into such a vehement laugh that he lost his horrible quid of tobacco. This change of mood enabled us to get on with our job. But our takes were often interrupted, for Uarema had started a vogue and couples would come along and insist on being photographed in their full feather rig.

III

For our forthcoming river trips we were anxious to engage one of Luis Antonio's many brothers, who was apparently of the same age and had the reputation of being the tribe's most experienced traveller. To a certain extent he was even familiar with the Samatari on the other side of the cordillera. But his wife was expecting a child, so that he was prevented from going very far away from home. This seemed to us the most natural thing in the world. The wife was a tiny little lady, her only sign of maturity being her enormous belly, which very clearly did not owe its size to the swelling caused by internal parasites, the privileged possession of these women and children. Without this evidence of pregnancy she might have been taken for a girl of ten.

'The birth will come any day now,' Luis Antonio told us. 'But my brother won't be able to start straight away. He'll have to rest.'

We were reminded of the ritual of childbirth which with a few variations here and there is practised by all the Indians of tropical America. It affects the husbands as well as the wives and at bottom, in its way, contains a certain realism, characteristic of primitive peoples. Like us, they accept the principle of cause and effect and they do not really ascribe the pregnancy to strange half-magic phenomena. They know its cause for what it is—man, and his erotic acts. The effect, for them, is not in the woman herself: she is only a means, a vehicle. The true effect is the child. Up to this point, their attitude is no different from ours. The different point of view comes with the valuation placed by the Indians upon the cause after the effect has been produced. They see the role of